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THE READING OF THE LAW AND PROPHETS IN A TRIENNIAL CYCLE.

THE public reading out of the Bible during divine service is an old institution, and certainly dates back to the time when the Jews and their Temple still existed in their native land. Like every other religious ceremony it had a small beginning, but it gradually developed till it assumed its present stationary form, round which has grown a comprehensive code of rules. It is well known that the Palestinian Jews completed the reading of the Pentateuch—which formed the basis of the Scriptural lessons for the Sabbath and holidays—in a period of three years, whilst the Babylonian, and after them the European Jews, who followed these latter in every religious question, arranged the reading of the Law so that it should extend over only one year. This difference of proceeding must be as old as the rearing of Babylonian schools by Palestinian Rabbis, and is, indeed, mentioned explicitly in the Talmud (*B. Megilla*, 29*b*). Although the majority of Jewish communities, as already noticed, adopted the Babylonian custom, yet we learn from the traveller Benjamin of Tudela, that in about the year 1170 there existed in Egypt congregations who were Palestinian in this respect, namely, that their reading of the Law extended over a period of three years (ed. Ascher, p. 98). Shortly after this, in the year 1180, Moses Maimonides writes (הלכות תפלה, xiii. 1) that the custom of finishing the Law triennially was not by any means universal, from which it is clear that many synagogues must have adopted this style. Some time later Abraham Maimuni, the son of the forementioned, informs us in his כפתארה אלעאבדין (MS. Catalog. Neubauer, No. 1274, p. 56*a*) of the same fact, at the same time giving an account of differences that transpired

in connection with other religious usages. Since these are unknown, it would not be amiss to quote the whole of this interesting passage.

וייגב אן תעלם אן מנהגות בני הגלות פי צלואתהם וקראתהם
פי ספר תורה פיהא אנואע מן אלשבושים מרכבה מן אלעאב
רוסא קצד פיהא נואמים ריאסה ותקאריר חזנים צעיפין אלעלם
או (p. 56a) עדימיה ואכתלט פיהא אלצואב באלכטא ואלואגב
באלמנכר ואלחסן בצדה וסכת אקואם עלמא ודיינין ואכיאר ען
אלאנכאר לאסבאב לא נחקקהא אמא לאן קדרתהם עגות ען
אלאנכאר ואמא לאן אלדי תבין לגירחה לם יתביין להם ולא
נקץ פי חקחם פי דלך ואמא לאסבאב אכר מטודה פי כל גזאיה
וגזאיה פי כל בלד ובין כל קהל עלי מתאל ואחד בל פיה
אכתללאף שדיד כמא בינא פי אלוקוף פי אלקדושה ואלקדיש וגיר
דלך ממא לם נבינה ועינינו ראו ולא זר פי הדה אלכלד אלתי
נחן פיהא מדינה מצר כניסתאן משהורתאן אחדאמהא תערף
באלעראקין אלמנהג פיהא פי אלצלחה ואלקראה פי ספר תורה
כמנהג בני הגלות כולם ותאניתהמא תערף באלשאמיין כאן להא
מנהג מכאלפא לכל אחד יקרי פי הדה פי ספר תורה פרשה
ופי הדה סדר ויקף פי הדה פי אלקדושה ויגלס פי הדה פי
אלקדושה וגיר דלך מן אלאכתללאף פי גזאיות כתירה וכאן אבא
מארי זצל ינכר דלך ושר אלאשראר וגירה אקצי לה אלסכות
וגירה מן תלמידי חכמים יציה ויסתגית מן דלך ואין לאל ידם
ונחן אלדי אלפנא פי ואיל תקדמנא אלדי נרגוא אן יכון רצחנא
למא דכרונא פיה מן זכיות מעאדלא לכסארה מא כסרנאה מן
אלאשתגאל בכמאלאת דיניה ומלאזמה אעמאל באטנה בין מנהג
אלכניסתין.

“It is necessary that you should know that into the practices of the Jews, both as regards the prayers and the reading of the Law, many errors have crept from different sources. Some are due to the blunders of the heads of the congregation, which concerned the most important rules; others to the fault of the Chazanim, who either knew little or nothing at all. Hence the right became confused with the wrong, the necessary with those which had no basis whatsoever; the good customs with the reverse. These people silenced the learned men and the Dayyanim, and

those who most vigorously led the opposition on grounds which I shall not attempt to examine, partly because they were not sufficiently powerful to give a practical effect to their opposition, and partly because what seemed clear to one was not at all convincing to the other; nor could any blame attach to them on this account; and also because the custom in all its details was not the same in every town, or indeed, in every congregation, many differences prevailing as I have explained in reference to standing in Kedusha and Kaddisch, and in even still more respects than I have mentioned. I have seen with my own eyes in the town where I live—Kairo—two recognised synagogues, one of which was known as the Babylonian, where the practice accepted by all Jews in prayers and reading of the Law was adopted; the other, the Palestinian, had a different custom, for whereas in the former the whole weekly portion was read every Sabbath, in the latter only a Seder was recited. Again, in the former place of worship, Kedusha was recited standing, in the latter sitting; and still other variations in many respects. My father and certain sages attempted to smooth away these divergences of Minhag, but to no purpose, owing to the efforts of the worst of men and others" (v. Hammanhig, p. 11).

Makrizi, about 1440 (see Schreiner in *Z. D. M. G.* vol. xlv., p. 298),¹ mentions the existence of these synagogues. An Egyptian, Joseph Sambari, in 1672, also speaks of them (Neubauer *Mediæval Jewish Chronicles*, p. 118); it is not quite certain from his words whether the custom still existed in his time, or whether he merely repeats the account given by Benjamin of Tudela. (The Synagogue was already destroyed.) This much is clear, at all events, that there existed in Egypt certain communities who adopted the Palestinian method of reading the Law. Grätz says (*Geschichte* VI., p. 285²), that those who practised this

¹ It is extraordinary that the traveller, Meshullam b. Menachem (Lunz's *Jerusalem*, I., p. 166) says nothing about this, though he could have said much about the year 1441.

² Cp. *Monatsschrift*, 1869, p. 397.

usage made their way from Palestine to Cairo in consequence of the persecution during the First Crusade. This cannot be verified. The fact, however, remains that there was a different reading in this town. Thus the solution of the problem as to what were the Haphtarahs according to the Palestinian practice could only be derived from documents which emanate from Egypt. And, indeed, we find among the MSS. lately brought over from Egypt to the Bodleian, one—to which my attention was called by Dr. Neubauer—which enumerates the Haphtarahs of the first seventy portions according to the Triennial Cycle, and gives us some knowledge of a hitherto obscure subject.

We must attribute the more value to this fragment since it is extremely probable that it comes from the above-mentioned Synagogue, and is of considerable antiquity. Before, however, we proceed to a consideration of the portions of the Prophets, it is necessary to give an account of the Pentateuch readings from their origin. The sources of information at our disposal are the Talmudic and Midrashic works of Jewish tradition, which have not been taken sufficient notice of in respect to the development of this institution.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENTATEUCH READINGS.

Tradition assumes three stages in the development of the custom of the reading of the Law ; the first is connected with Moses, the second with the Prophets, and the third with Ezra. It is well known that tradition has ascribed to Moses and Ezra many institutions, whose origin, dating back to ancient times, was already forgotten. To Ezra especially is attributed all that pertains to the reading of the Law and the arrangement of the Liturgy. It is possible, because of the circumstance that tradition itself assumed a development, to establish firmly the origin and historical progress of this custom.

The Sifra to Leviticus xxiii. 43 infers from the verse,

"And Moses declared the festivals of the Lord to the children of Israel," that Moses taught on each festival those laws which are special to it. The same conclusion is drawn in other language in the Sifre to Deut. xvi. 1: "Moses said, Take notice to read and explain the festival portions (of Holy Writ)." From this passage we infer that the introduction of the reading out of the Pentateuch had its origin in the festivals, and we see also that tradition supposes several stages of development in the institutions of Moses, inasmuch as the festivals only are mentioned in this passage of the Sifre. What was really the occasion of this first reading? It is not necessary to mention that the first trace of the public reciting of the Law is in Nehemiah viii. 8, for it does not speak of a lasting institution, which must belong to a later date. It is this latter which claims our attention. It seems to me that it was the Samaritans who gave the occasion for the first step. We know that they were the religious as well as political opponents of those Jews who returned from exile. They showed their religious animosity chiefly in their deviation from the ordinary explanation of those portions of the Pentateuch which concern the festivals. They were not satisfied with holding a passive opinion, but tried hard to procure an acceptance of their particular views (Geiger, *Z.D.M.G.*, Vol. xx., p. 540 ff.). The people had to be taught by the Palestinian scholars how to meet their attack; this could not be better achieved, or in a simpler manner, than by reading and explaining the disputed passages in the Pentateuch on the Festivals themselves which had been made the subject of controversy. The time when this happened may be approximately determined. Josephus (*Antiquities* XIII. iii. 4) tells us that the Samaritans in Egypt about 140 B.C. received permission of the king to enter into public disputation with the Jews. Grätz (*Geschichte* iii.,⁴ p. 44) is of opinion that this desire was aroused in consequence of the Septuagint translation, which did not take into consideration

the Samaritan misreadings of the Pentateuch. It is also possible to assume that this disputation was an opportunity for the bursting forth of a hatred which had held out a long time in Palestine without having produced a dispute. Again, Sirach in his preface informs us (*v. Philo, De Somniis* II., 18; *cp. Grätz, loc. cit.*, p. 42),¹ that already in the second century B.C. the Egyptian Jews had as a permanent institution the public reading of the Law, with all accessory expositions, and since all the religious observances were borrowed from Palestine, it follows that the Jews in this latter country, at about 200 B.C., must have already introduced this practice.² The opposition of the Samaritans was directed to the institution of the Passover as to whether it really depended on the time of the year, the exposition of the phrase *ממחרת השבת* in Leviticus xxiii. 15, and the *Lulab* used on Tabernacles. The Pharisees, as is well known, explained the words, "the day following the Sabbath," that on the second day of Passover the first sheaf has to be brought; from that date seven weeks were counted, and on the fiftieth day—the same on which the second day of Passover fell—and which is the sixth of Sivan, the festival of Shebuoth was celebrated. On the other hand, the Samaritans and Boethusians contended that by *שבת* is meant the ordinary Sabbath which occurs in the Passover week. Consequently the Omer should be brought on the Sunday, and on the eighth Sunday the festival of Shevuoth should take place, the day of the month being variable. Just as literally did they explain the law regarding the *Lulab*, and also the date of the Passover holidays (Geiger, *loc. cit.*, p. 544). Thus the controversy concerned all the three festivals (mentioned in Leviticus xxiii.), on which tradition assumes the

¹ Philo (*loc. cit.*, p. 168, 130) agrees with Josephus in ascribing to Moses the introduction of Law-reading only for Sabbath and Festivals. See Berliner's *Magazin*, vii., p. 66.

² For Philo's articles on Divine Service vide Schürer, *Geschichte des Jüd. Volkes* II., p. 376.

first reading of the Law to have occurred. Tradition moreover bases the introduction of the custom on the same chapter. The expression *מקרא קודש*, which is used in reference to a festival, may have been taken by those teachers who introduced it as a Biblical warranty for this new rite, inasmuch as they may have paraphrased it to mean, "holy reading out of the Torah" (Hamburger, *Real Encyclopädie* II.; article "Vorlesen"; Friedmann, *Beth Talmud* III., p. 6, ff.).

Tradition also refers back to Moses the reading of the Law on the four special Sabbaths in the months Shebat and Adar (v. *Tractate Sopherim* xxi. 4); and here also it is possible to discover the period of its introduction. The commencement of the so-called Chronicle of Fasts (*Megillath Ta'anith*) reads as follows:—"From the 1st to the 8th of Nissan it is prohibited to fast, because during this time the question concerning the daily offering was determined. No public funeral oration should be delivered during these days, because the Sadducees asserted that this offering should be brought as a free-will sacrifice by every individual. They base their opinion on Numbers xxviii. 4, 'Thou shalt bring each of you a lamb,' where the verb is expressed in the singular, and signifies an individual. Against this view the sages declared: 'This is not the correct interpretation of the quotation in question, for the only method of bringing a congregational sacrifice is by general contribution.' Then the sages, when they gained the upper hand, ordered that Shekalim should be collected and placed in the temple, which shekels should be used to defray the expenses of the daily offering. The eight days during which the controversy lasted were to be celebrated in future as half-holidays." Thus far the Chronicle. We know that this event took place 79 B.C., and since the Talmud enumerates other institutions which owed their origin to this victory of the Pharisees, we can assume with much probability that the reading of the portion of Shekalim was introduced in order that the

people should have adequate knowledge of the disputed passages.

Nor did the controversy between the two parties rage only in respect to the Shekalim, but also the ceremony of the Red Heifer formed a subject of strife.¹ The portion which treats of this subject is also read on one of the four special Sabbaths.

On another of these Sabbaths is read the passage dealing with the declaration of the New Moon of Nissan. This also formed an object of dispute to these religious sects. It is probable that the fourth Sabbath, called זכור after the first word in Deuteronomy xxv. 17, had its origin in this quarrel, inasmuch as the Pharisees impressed on the people the necessity of avoiding Hellenism in all its forms by alluding to the enemy whose customs the Hellenistic Jews adopted. This action was directed against the leaning of the Sadducees to Greek habit and culture.

A third tradition carries us still further in the history of the development of the Pentateuch readings. It informs us in connection with the citation of Leviticus xxiii. 44 (*Jerushalmi Megilla*, iv. 1) that Moses introduced the reading of the Law on Sabbaths, on festivals, New Moons, and Half-holidays (v. *Tractate Sopherim* x. 1). We have already seen what occasioned the reading on the festivals. In respect to the Sabbath there is no need to inquire after a special historical origin, for it was merely an extension of the custom that had already been established on the festivals and the four Sabbaths. It must have been introduced before the Christian era; for the Apostles (Luke iv. 16; Acts xiii. 15 and xv. 21) mention the reading on every Sabbath as an established rite. Again, Josephus (*Contra Apionem* ii. 18)² ascribes the innovation to Moses, from which it is clear that it was for

¹ Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 134. Lerner in *Berliner's Magazin*, x. p. 143.

² οὐκ εἰσάπαξ ἀκροασάμενος οὐδὲ δις ἢ πολλάκις ἀλλ' ἐκάστης ἐβδομάδος τῶν ἄλλων ἔργων ἀφιμένους, ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκρόασιν τοῦ νόμου ἐκίλευσε συλλέγεσθαι καὶ τοῦτον ἀκριβῶς ἐκμανθάνειν.

him an ancient institution, and one in vogue before the common era. The expression *מקרא קודש* in Leviticus **xxiii. 3** gives us a warranty for this introduction, yet the phrase is not found in connection either with the Half-holiday or New Moon. If, however, we examine the *Mechilta* (to Exodus xii. 14, 17; xiii. 6), we find that it establishes the conclusion that the middle days of the feasts are called *מקרא קודש*. Add to this the fact that these days as well as New Moon are included in Numbers **xxviii. and xxix.** among those occasions on which a *Musaph* offering is to be brought, and are considered as festivals, and the introduction of Torah readings on these occasions becomes intelligible to us.

The reading on Saturday afternoon and Monday and Thursday mornings is in the *Mechilta* to Exodus xv. 22, ascribed to the Prophets (see Weiss and Friedmann on this passage) and in *Jerushalmi Meg.* iv. 2 to Ezra. This institution is at any rate of a later origin than those already mentioned, since tradition assigns it to later authorities than the others. It probably originated in the time of the first Tannaim, after the destruction of the Temple, when every opportunity was seized to acquaint the people with a knowledge of the Law. Monday and Thursday had already been set aside as Court days from ancient times. In the *Jerushalmi* (*loc. cit.*) this institution is attributed to Ezra. On these days the villagers used to assemble in the towns, and consequently the Law was read on Monday and Thursday in preference to other week days.

Before we treat of the extension of the custom to include Chanucca, Purim and the fast days mentioned in the *Mishna* (*Megilla*, iv.), without naming the originators, it is necessary to set forth those passages which were read in synagogues on the festivals and Sabbaths which we have already dealt with. We saw that the opposition of the Samaritans, which was the cause of the introduction of the festival readings, applied to many verses in Leviticus

xxiii., so that it follows that on each festival portions were selected to be read out of this chapter. The Mishna (*Megilla* iii. 5) established this as a law by enacting that Leviticus xxiii. 4 should be recited on the 1st day of Pesach, ver. 23 on the New Year's Day, and ver. 33 on Tabernacles (v. Müller, *Tractate Sopherim*, p. 242). For Shebuoth and Yom Kippur, however, it selected Deut. xvi. 9, and Levit. xvi. 1 respectively, that is to say, the selection was not in these cases from Leviticus xxiii., and this fact needs explanation. From the fact that the Mishna endorses our view in three cases, we infer that originally the readings for the two above-mentioned feasts were also taken from Leviticus xxiii. ; in the course of time, however, a change was made in the Pentateuchal lessons, the nature of which we shall now proceed to consider.

We notice that even the readings which the Mishna ordained should be chosen from Leviticus xxiii., gradually lapsed in the Synagogue, others taking their place. Again, we see that an altogether new festival lesson is introduced, a Boraitha (*B. Megilla*, 31a) naming Exodus xiii. as the portion for the 7th day of Pesach. Although this latter festival is designated **מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ**, yet neither the Mishna, nor Tosefta, nor Palestinian Talmud, assigned to it a special reading. The reason for this omission is clear from what has already been said. This festival had no importance in the controversy that ensued between the Samaritans and the Pharisees. Consequently no public explanation of any particular text was deemed necessary, so that originally there was no Torah recitation on that day. Yet why was Exodus xiii. chosen later on? Was it because tradition had it (*Mechilta* on this passage) that the passage through the Red Sea took place on this day; that, therefore, the portion of the Bible which described that incident was chosen as the lesson? And granted that this is so, is this no new stage in the development that such pieces should be selected as commemorate an event that happened on the same day? Let us add to this what the Babylonian

Talmud (*Megilla*, 31a) has to say on this subject, namely, that the Babylonian Jews read out of Leviticus xxiii. on the 1st day of Pesach, and yet on the 2nd day from Exodus xii. Both Pesiktas also enact that both these pieces should be read as festival portions, though in reverse order. Now we ask, How is it that this second portion was chosen, if it were not in commemoration of an event that happened on that day? Further, we see that the Tosefta (*Megilla* iii. 6) gives Genesis xxi. as the New Year reading in place of that given by the Mishna and *Tractate Sopherim* (xvii. 6), namely, Leviticus xxiii., which, however, though only cited by the Tosefta with the formula, "Some say," must be considered as the original. The Boraitha (*Megilla* 31a), the Talmud (*J. Megilla* iii. 7), and both Pesiktas give these two portions, declaring the Genesis reading to be the first. Here we must emphatically ask, Where is it explicitly stated in the Bible that Sarah was remembered on New Year's day? What led the Aggada to make such a statement? Should we not rather thus explain the matter, that independent of any purpose, this portion was read on New Year, and on this account was it that the incident of the birth of Isaac became associated with that festival? Yet why was this part of the Law recited on so solemn an occasion? A simple way out of the difficulty is supplied by a consideration of the triennial reading of the Law, which must undoubtedly be presupposed in Palestinian sources, in the Mishna, Palestinian Talmud, the Boraitha and the Tosefta.

As is well known, the Masora enumerates 154 divisions in the Pentateuch, called Sedarim, which Rappoport (הליכות קדם, p. 11) already recognised as the Sabbath readings of the triennial system.

This conjecture is supported by the fact that paragraphs of the Midrashic works of Palestinian origin are connected with these Sedarim, so that each portion was arranged for its special Sabbath, and formed the groundwork of the Midrashic discussion in the Synagogue. (Rappoport in *Erech*

Millin, article אפמרתא; Derenbourg in *Manuel du Lecteur*, p. 530; Müller in *Tractate Sopherim*, p. 221; Theodor in Grätz's *Monatsschrift*, year 1885, p. 356.)¹ We must also take into account the imperfectly preserved "Aggada to Genesis" (Jellinek: *Beth Hammidrash*, IV.), which shows, not only by its Pentateuchal, but also by its Prophetical passages, that it supposes a triennial system of reading the Law and Prophets.² The number 155, which the Midrash also mentions (*Esther Rabba* I.), can scarcely be brought into question (v. Friedmann in *Beth Talmud*, III.); and yet three other computations are cited against it. The Yemen grammar, known as the *Manuel du Lecteur*, giving a detailed list of the Sedarim, enumerates 167, which are too many for three years, as at most these can only comprise 161 Sabbaths. The great Massorite, Menachem Meiri (died 1306), in his work, קריית ספר, under the head of סדרי הראשונים, reckons 161 divisions in all, which correspond to the greatest number of Sabbaths possible in three years. Against this we have the number 175, mentioned by the *Tractate Soferim* (xvi. 10), supported by the Talmud (*J. Sabbath*, I., 1), as the total of the Pentateuch divisions. This, however, cannot be justified. The explanation of Solomon Algazi (Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*,³ p. 3, note f), that this enumeration corresponds to the number of Sabbaths in three and a-half years, since the Torah was read through twice in seven years, is very tempting. There is, however, no mention of this custom in the ancient sources. The Talmud, indeed (*B. Meg.* 29b), says explicitly that the Torah was in Palestine read through in a period of three years. Granted, now, that the figure 175 is the result of an interpolation—which, indeed, is extremely probable (Frankel's *Zeitschrift*, year 1844, p. 357)—the question in reference to the other three

¹ Cp. Epstein, מקרמוניות היהודים, p. 57.

² Theodor, *loc. cit.*, p. 405.

³ Epstein, *loc. cit.*, p. 59.

opinions is not yet settled, since the attempt has not yet been made to discover what really were the portions read on particular Sabbaths in accordance with the triennial method. Since it has now been determined that the Midrashic works, on account of their Palestinian origin, proceeded on the basis of a triennial cycle, the system of the ancient readings can only be gathered from these sources. The most important question to decide is, When was the reading of Genesis commenced? and also that which goes naturally with it, When was the reading of the Pentateuch brought to a finish? The divisions, according to the annual system adopted by the Samaritans, Babylonian Jews, and Karaites, commenced with the last Sabbath in Tishri, from which it might have been inferred that this also was the first Sabbath among the Palestinian Jews. This, however, is very doubtful, since it is nowhere stated in the Babylonian Talmud that this formed the starting-point in the time of the Amoraim. If we divide, first of all, the 155 Sedarim into three parts corresponding to the three years, we find that they are Genesis i. till Exodus x., Exodus xi. till Numbers vi., Numbers vi. 22 till Deut. xxxiv. Let us notice first the third part, so as to discover when the cycle terminated. The first portion of the same includes the priestly blessing, and the offerings of the twelve tribal chiefs after the erection of the tabernacle. Tradition assumes, on the basis of Exod. xl. 2 and Levit. ix. 22, that both of these took place on the 1st of Nissan. Was it not natural that the Sabbath lessons should be so arranged that this portion should be read on the first Sabbath in the month of Nissan? It follows from this, naturally, that Deuteronomy xxxiv. must have been read in Adar, so that the Pentateuch could be recommenced on the 1st of Nissan. Now we know that in Adar there were three special Sabbaths on which certain specified portions were read peculiar to these days, so that the reading of the Pentateuch must have been brought to an end on the first Sabbath in Adar.

That this really was the case is evident from this striking Aggadic passage. The *Mechilta* to Exodus xvi. 35 reads:—
 רבי יהושע אומר ארבעים יום אכלו את המן אחרי מות משה
 כיצד משה מת בשבעה באדר ואכלו ממנו ארבעה ועשרים יום
 של אדר וששה עשר של ניסן הרי ארבעים • ר' אלעזר המודעי
 אומר שבעים יום אכלו את המן אחר מיתתו של משה כיצד משה
 מת בשבעה באדר ואכלו ממנו עשרים וארבעה ימים של אדר
 הראשון ושלושים של אדר השני ששנת עבור היתה וששה
 עשר של ניסן הרי שבעים רבי אליעזר אומר שבעים יום אכלו
 ישראל את המן אחר מיתתו של משה כיצד משה מת בשבעה
 בשבט ואכלו ממנו עשרים וארבעה ימים של שבט ושלושים
 של אדר ואותה שנה לא היתה מעוברת וששה עשר של ניסן¹ :
 "R. Joshua says the Israelites ate of the Manna forty
 days after the death of Moses, for he died on the 7th Adar,
 and the twenty-four days of Adar and sixteen of Nissan
 (Joshua vi. 11) together make forty. R. Elazar, opposing
 him, is of the opinion that they ate of this food seventy
 days after their leader's death, since it was a leap year,
 and, therefore, contained thirty days more. Rabbi Eliezer
 quotes seventy as the number, since, in his opinion, Moses
 died on the 7th of Shebat, the tale of days between this
 date and the 16th of Nissan being seventy."¹ One must
 feel greatly astonished at this vivid imagination of the
 Tannaim, and one cannot help finding it odd that they
 dispute about a date which has not the least founda-
 tion in Holy Writ. If, however, we remember that
 the portion in which the death of Moses is described,
 Deuteronomy xxxiv., was always read about the 7th of
 Adar, we at last come to understand how it is that this
 peculiar date was taken. The reckoning of this death-day
 was made in a year in which the 7th Adar fell on a Sab-
 bath, which was not always the case; therefore is it that
 we find different accounts, fluctuating between the 6th,

¹ I quote this passage from the edition of Friedmann, which preserves the third portion—omitted by Weiss—on the authority of the Yalkut. The MS. in the Bodleian Library (Catalogue Neubauer, No. 151) has it also; and, in addition to these proofs, it is otherwise thoroughly authenticated.

7th, and 8th, as the correct date of Moses' death (*v. Weiss* on this passage and *Seder Olam*, ch. x.).

We shall return later on to the opinion of R. Eliezer, who placed the day as the 7th Shebat. We are now in possession of the exact dates on which the Torah reading was begun and finished, and we need only inquire whether the readings of the first two years fall in line with this arrangement. We found that Exodus xii. formed the opening chapter of the second year of the triennial cycle. Now the first verse of the chapter reads: "This month shall be unto you the first of all months," and orders that Nissan should be counted as the first of the months. It is hardly necessary to point out that this lesson was proper to and suitable for the first Sabbath of the month Nissan. The first reading of the first year, Genesis i., is also perfectly consistent with this view; for we see that, in the opinion of R. Eliezer, the world was created on the 1st Nissan (*B. Rosh Hash.*, 10*b*). In order to give a detailed explanation of every one of the passages in the triennial cycle, it is necessary to give an account of the further division of the Sedarim.

I commence with the second year, as here we have at our disposal a good many statements to help and guide us in our investigations. In the same passage of the Mechilta, wherein the death of Moses is so exactly determined, the Aggadist dogmatically asserts that the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt took place on Thursday, the 15th Nissan (*v. Seder Olam*, cap. x.). Let us examine such a year, in which the 15th Nissan fell on a Thursday, as an example of our division, and let us follow the Aggadist's dates also in the arrangement of the Sedarim. Since in that year the 1st of Nissan was on Thursday, the first Sabbath must have been the third of the month. On this day, as already stated, Exodus xii. 1 was read. In the third verse the command is given by Moses to have the Pesach Lamb ready by the 10th of Nissan. This day was a Sabbath, which was called "the great," on account of

the miracle mentioned in the Mechilta as having been performed on that day. The carrying out of the command is described in xii. 21, which is, in accordance with my view, the portion of the second Sabbath. The same Aggadist remarks on xiv. 2 that the Israelites who went out from Egypt on Thursday, encamped at Ramses on Sabbath, 17th Nissan, on which day, therefore, xii. 37 was read. In xiv. 9, he comes to the conclusion that the passage through the Red Sea occurred on Wednesday the 21st of Nissan, and therefore Exodus xiv. 9 was read on this day, the 7th of Pesach. If we examine this result in the light thrown by the Mechilta on this subject, we are furnished with the solution to the question propounded above, What was the occasion of the reading of Exod. xii. 29, on the 1st day of Pesach, and xiii. 17, on the 7th? The answer being that these passages were regularly reached on those occasions. When, later on, it was seen that these two Sedarim were well suited to these holidays, they were established, even when the three years' cycle was not in vogue, as the ordinary lessons of those days.¹ Let us follow the same authority further. It is stated in xv. 22 that the Israelites, after passing through the sea, wandered three days in the wilderness, and found no water till they—according to the computation of our exegetist—came to Marah on Sabbath, where the Sabbath Law, among others, was enunciated. Hence we infer that xv. 22 was the reading for the fourth Sabbath. A second tradition (*Seder Olam*, cap. v.) endorses this view by declaring that the Israelites came to Rephidim on Sabbath, 29th (according to the Mechilta, the 28th) of Iyyar. Our Aggadist tells us in reference to xvi. 1 that the 1st of Sivan fell on

¹ It seems that in Palestine the fourteenth chapter was read only till verse 29th, and that the following portion commenced with וַיִּשַׁע, which explains the Midrash of the same name. Tradition also has it (*Seder Olam*, v.) that the crossing over of the Red Sea happened at evening, whilst the שִׁירָה was sung on the following morning. It is more probable that the festival reading itself began with וַיִּשַׁע.

Sunday, and the Revelation on the 6th, Friday; further he says, on xix., that the first verse speaks of the New Moon, so that we have here the reading for the first Sabbath in Sivan.¹

With the help of the Mechilta, which, on account of the date explicitly given in Exodus xvi. 1, is only of partial assistance to us, we can assign to the five Sabbaths of Iyyar the text from xvi. 1 to xviii., which gives the four portions—xvi. 1, 28; xvii. 1; xviii. 1. For the 1st and 8th of Iyyar, the verses that treat of the incident of the Manna thus formed the Pentateuchal lessons.²

For the 29th of Iyyar, in such a year as is cited by the Mechilta, wherein Iyyar has five Sabbaths, there remains xix. 6. On Shebuoth then the Decalogue was read, which gives us the reason why this portion later on was always chosen as the lesson for Shebuoth. It followed simply from the fact that in the second year of the cycle, in the ordinary course of reading, this portion was reached at this festival, and was then carried over to other years.³

¹ *Seder Olam*, v., agrees with all the accounts given in the Mechilta, with the trifling exception that it makes the exodus from Egypt happen on Friday, and consequently the Revelation on Saturday. Yet the MS. Catalogue, Neubauer, No. 692, is in total agreement with the Mechilta. For us, this difference is of little import. At any rate, this fact is apparent, that, like the death of Moses, it admits of various dates, which, however, are all confined to the same week, since it is connected with the weekly portion.

² It is stated (vi. 4) in the Gospel of St. John, which gives comparatively exact dates, "Pesach, the feast of the Jews is near," and in vii. 2, "Tabernacles is drawing near." Between these two dates there is a sermon on the Manna, which—according to vi. 59, "he said this in the Synagogue when he was teaching in Capernaum,"—was delivered on Sabbath, and was probably connected, according to prevailing custom, with the weekly portion. We have seen that this was recited either on the first or second Sabbath of the month Iyyar.

³ The Shebuoth portion for the Babylonian Jews commenced with chapter xix. It can be proved that in Palestine it began with xx., since the *Seder* before extended from xix. 6-25. It is stated in the Talmud (*B. Nedarim*, 38a) that the Palestinians must have divided Ex. xix. 9 into three parts, since no reading could contain as many as twenty-one

I have dealt with the *Mechilta* passages with this detail for the purpose of showing that many Midrashic statements imply, and at the same time prove that they are based on a division of the *Sedarim* according to a triennial cycle. It follows from the reckoning, which is derived from tradition, that out of eight *Sedarim* given in the Masoretic divisions of the Pentateuch, ten Sabbath lessons were formed. We saw that this latter method of apportioning readings removed naturally difficulties which belong to the development of the festival readings. It makes clear to us that the first occasion for the reading of portions on festivals which commemorate events which happened in the same holiday is derived from Exodus xii., xiii. and xix., and this mode of selection also reorganised other festival lessons. In the apportioning of the various successive *Sedarim*, we assign Exodus xxi. for the 7th Sivan, and xxii. 24, for the 14th; this latter chapter, the *Seder Olam* (Cap. vi.), also connects with the same date. For the *Seder Olam* remarks that Moses climbed Mount Sinai seven days after the Revelation. This event is narrated in the Biblical chapter in question read on the 14th of Sivan. We are next able to assign Ex. xxxiv. 1 as the reading on the last Sabbath of the month Ab, with which opinion tradition is in accord (*loc. cit.*), inasmuch as it informs us that Moses went up Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone on the 29th of Ab,¹ which occurrence is related in xxxiv. 1. Lev. i. falls on the last Sabbath in Elul; iv. 1 on the 1st of Tishri; v. 1 on the 2nd; vi. 12 on the first Sabbath in Tishri; viii. 1, on the Day of Atonement. I have here supplied the two festivals with lessons which are nowhere mentioned in the Rabbinical sources,

verses. This division is only necessary if the portion, xix. 6-25, stands alone, which contains only twenty verses, whence it is clear that chapters xix. and xx. could never have been read together.

¹ MS. Catalogue, Neubauer, No. 692, differs from this account by one day remarking עשה עוד ארבעים משלשים באב ער עשרה בתשרי, which is only another computation based on the same text.

yet which must be assigned to these festivals in the ordinary course of the triennial reading. We saw that those selections were recited on first and seventh days of Pesach and Shebuoth, which were reached on those festivals in the unbroken succession of Sedarim. This must also have been the case with the New Year and Day of Atonement. This view is confirmed in another quarter. The Mishna (*Megilla* iii. 6), says that those parts of the Torah that are read on Monday and Thursday must be repeated on the following Sabbath, since the duty is imposed on us by Leviticus xxiii. 44 to read every portion in its suitable time. This admonition evidently presumes that the continuous reading of the Law on successive Sabbaths would naturally assign the portion connected with a certain festival for that very occasion. This is undeniably proved in the case of the three days already mentioned, and consequently it must apply also to the Day of Atonement. It seems pretty clear that Leviticus viii. 1 to x. 7 must have been read on the Great Fast, since a Boraitha has shown the identity of the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement with those described in Leviticus ix. (*B. Joma*, 4a). Again, the Midrashic discussions demonstrate that the offering mentioned in this chapter atoned for the sins committed in connection with the Golden Calf, which another tradition (*Seder Olam*, ch. vi.) states were forgiven on the Day of Atonement. We have yet another proof that the portion was recited on the Feast in ancient times. The Mishna (*Megilla* iii. 4) establishes the following rule: "The course of the Torah readings should be interrupted on New Moon, Chanucca, Purim, fast days and the Day of Atonement." The question which naturally arises in connection with this enactment, and which is asked by all commentators, namely, Why is only one of the festivals mentioned?—cannot be easily answered. If all ingenious guesses are avoided, it follows simply that at the time when the regular Sabbath readings were introduced, those Sedarim were read on the festivals which fell to

their share in the course of the ordinary reading. This applied also to the Day of Atonement, and it was only at a later date that Leviticus xvi. was substituted for Leviticus viii. 1. The origin of this change was probably due in the first instance to the fact that this portion was recited in the Temple by the High Priest (*Joma* vii. 1), and the festival itself is mentioned towards the finish. Whether the fact that the occurrence narrated in x. 7 is continued in xvi. 1 had anything to do with the choice of this portion cannot be determined. In regard to the apportioning of the other Sedarim, we only remark that Numbers was commenced on the second Sabbath of the month Shebat, and that the four following selections were so arranged that the last one was read on the Sabbath of the week in which the 7th of Adar fell.

The third year of the cycle, as already stated, opened with Numbers vi. 22, and in a year when the 1st of Nissan fell on a Sunday, this portion would be delivered on the Sabbath before. Such a year it was when the events related in the Seder happened (*Sifre* and *Midrash* to the passage; *Seder Olam* vii.). This explains what otherwise is extremely surprising, namely, the *Masora* divides ch. vii., which describes one incident, at ver. 48, into two Sabbath portions, which at first sight seems unjustifiable. If, however, we assume that the 1st of Nissan fell on Sunday, and that vi. 22 was the lesson for the day before, then ver. 48, which begins with the 7th day, is appropriate for the 7th Nissan. In this way viii. 1 would be read on the 14th of Nissan, and on the 15th, ix. 1, the portion which, describing as it does the Pesach festival, was peculiarly suitable to that day. According to the continuous series of the *Sedarim*, Numbers xv. would fall to the third Sabbath in Iyyar. This view is endorsed by tradition, since it declares (*Sifre* to xv. 32) that the Sabbath, which is described in this section as having been violated, was the second which the Israelites had spent in the desert. How does the author of this statement

arrive at so exact a date? From the circumstance that this *Seder* was the lesson for the third Sabbath. He infers, moreover, that this Sabbath was the 22nd Iyyar, from the reckoning adopted by the *Mechilta* (to Exodus xvi. 1), which dates as the 15th of Iyyar, the first Sabbath which the Israelites solemnised in the wilderness (*B. Baba Kama*, 119a). The Talmud (*Bab. Taanith*, 30b) makes a statement which is worth consideration in respect to the question when the Book of Numbers was finished. The reason is asked there, Why should the 15th of Ab be celebrated as a day of joy? The answer given is that on this day permission was given to the members of the various tribes of Israel to intermarry with each other (Cp. *J. Taanith*, iv. 9; *B. Baba Kama*, 115). The Talmud has in mind Numbers xxxvi. and Judges xxi., in which passages this intermarriage is allowed. Thus this portion must have been the reading for the third Sabbath in Ab. More force is probably added to this explanation by the fact that Deuteronomy i. 3 mentions a date which (according to the counting of Tishri as the first month), would fall in Elul, the eleventh month, and this portion, therefore, would have been appropriately read on the Sabbath before 1st Elul. From this it follows that the Decalogue was read either on the Sabbath before the New Year, or on this day itself.

We are only now in a position to explain an old tradition which ascribes a certain institution in regard to Torah reading to Ezra. In the Talmud (*J. Megilla* iv. 1) ten innovations are referred back to Ezra, among which is not to be found the one we are about to treat of. The reason for this will soon be apparent. A Boraitha (*B. Meg.* 31b) says that Ezra enacted that the curses in Leviticus xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. should be read respectively before Shebuoth and Rosh Hashana. On the assumption that when these unusual readings were introduced, the regular triennial cycle of Sabbath portions was in vogue, it is absolutely impossible to place

these two lessons on the two dates required. This forced Grätz¹ to the conclusion that there was a bien-nial cycle, for which, however, there is no other foundation. Just as the reading from the Pentateuch on the four special Sabbaths formed the first Sabbath lessons without implying the existence of regular readings, even so was it with these two instances. If they are of this age, the question arises, What was the historical occasion of the custom to read the curses on these fixed days? According to the triennial cycle, as we have already seen, the Decalogue, Exod. xx., was read on Shebuoth, the same in Deut. v. on New Year, and just before both of these the curses were to be recited. Was there then any connection between the Decalogue and the curses? Now, in olden times, it was not customary for the person called to read a portion in the Law to say the benediction at the close of his reading. In the Talmud (*J. Meg.* iii. 7) it is, however, stated that the blessing over the Torah must be said after the curses in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. R. Joshua opposes this opinion, contending that the Torah blessing should accompany the Decalogue and the שִׁירָה in addition to the curses. We thus see that the curses and Decalogue were included under one category, which implies a relationship between the two. We notice that the maledictions follow closely upon verse 4 in Deut. xxvii., which the Samaritans falsified in order to prove the holiness of their Temple; yet they were not satisfied with this, but considered the interpolated verse of such importance as to incorporate it as the tenth commandment in the Decalogue. Against this proceeding the sages were obliged to interpose as they did in respect to the festivals, inasmuch as they joined together the two passages which had been tampered with. This exposure of the falsification of the Samaritans had to be clearly brought out in reading Deut. xxvii. 12, where Mount Gerizim is

¹ *Monatsschrift*, 1869, p. 396.

expressly named, and this purpose clearly appears in the utterances of the Mishna (*Sota* vi. 4, *Cp. Tosefta* vi. and *J. Sota* vii. 3). The Samaritans had also the custom of reading the Decalogue on Shebuoth and the New Year (*vide* Petermann, *Reise in Orient*, p. 290).

It seems, then, that this institution of reading the curses before these two festivals belongs to the time of the introduction of the festival readings, which have been attributed to Moses. Consequently then we would expect that tradition should ascribe to Moses also the establishment of the reading under discussion. This, however, is impossible, since it was probably still known to the Rabbis that the passages in question were directed against the Samaritans who first made their appearance in the time of Ezra. This institution, however, is not enumerated among those ascribed to Ezra, since it was considered to be much older. At any rate, we have here a confirmation of the opinion that Deut. v. was read on New Year. On the following Sabbath the Seder was vi. 4 to vii. 11, for which in the treatment of the Haphtarah we shall find a warranty in tradition.

We have not yet spoken concerning the Sedarim of the first year of the triennial cycle.

Following the Massoretic division, Genesis iii. 24 to iv. 26 falls to the first day of Passover, whereby we find the source of the Midrash cited in the Targum pseudo-Jonathan (to iv. 1), that Adam taught his sons how to bring sacrifices, and that they brought a Pesach offering (v. Pirke de R. Eliezer to the passage, and Yalkut). This was merely a remark made in connection with the reciting of this portion on first day of Pesach.

On the sixth Sabbath counted from the 1st Nissan, falls the portion commencing with vi. 9, which fits in well with the date given in vii. 11.

On the New Year, in this first year of the cycle, xxx. 22 was reached as the Scriptural lesson of the day, which Seder commences with the words: "God remembered

Rachel," and harmonises with the declaration of the Aggada that Rachel was remembered on New Year's day (*B. Rosh Hash.*, 10*b*).¹ When once it was assumed that one of the matriarchs was remembered on this day by God in respect to the blessing of children, the idea broadened to include Rebecca and Sarah as well. Hence comes it that the portion describing how Sarah was visited by God was selected as the reading for New Year, *i.e.*, Genesis xxi. The first book was finished in the middle of Shebat, and the second was begun on the third week of the same month. It is worthy of remark, though perhaps only a mere coincidence, that the first book of the Pentateuch commenced on the 1st of Nissan, the fifth on the 1st of Elul, the third on the first of Tishri, the second and fourth on the 15th of Shebat, thus corresponding to the four dates given in the Mishna (*Rosh Hash.*, i. 1) as first days of the year for various subordinate purposes, *e.g.* the tithing of animals and fruit. We shall soon return to this point.

In the consideration of the divisions according to the triennial cycle, we have found the origin for the substitution for the original festival readings out of Leviticus xxiii. of altogether new Sedarim, which have often no connection with the holidays on which they are read. We have also discovered that the development of the institution is closely connected with the introduction of the regular Sabbath readings. In possession of this important information we can now still further follow the development of

¹ M. Schechter called my attention to the dates in the Midrash Tadshe, which agree with those in the Book of the Jubilees (v. Epstein מִקְרָמוֹנִיּוֹת, הַיְיָוִדִים, p. iv. ff.) In the eighth chapter of this work the days are given on which the twelve tribal fathers were born; it is evident that Levi and Joseph form the basis of this reckoning, perhaps indeed only the latter, the date of whose death alone is stated in the Pentateuch. If we notice the date given by the Midrash Tadshe as the birthday of Joseph, we find that it is the first of Tishri, the day on which, according to the triennial cycle, the Seder telling of his birth would fall. The birthday of Benjamin (*Yalkut*, No. 162), on 11th Chesvan, follows from the reading of Genesis xxxv. on this day.

the festival lessons. We have already pointed out the fact that the Mishna ordains the reading of Deut. xvi. 9 on Shebuoth (*Megilla* iii. 5). This has no foundation in the division of the Sedarim, and proceeds from the time when the festival portions had not yet been reorganised by the introduction of the regular Sabbath portions, at which period it was confidently believed that the opposition of the Samaritans and the Sadducees could be better met by these passages.¹ (Compare the remarks of the Sifre to the passage.) It seems that in many localities this reading was retained long after the introduction of Exod. xx., for the Tractate Sopherim (xvii. 6), which always takes the Palestinian Talmud into consideration, gives the Mishna unaltered and not the account in the Talmud (*J. Megilla*, iii. 7). This latter passage names expressly Exod. xx., the portion derived from the ordinary course of the Sabbath readings. The Tosefta (*Megilla* iv. 5) and the Boraitha (*B. Megilla* 31a) cite the same Seder.² The two Pesiktas have both pieces alternately, which proves the indefiniteness of practice to have survived after the completion of the Palestinian Talmud.

The same progress in the development is to be noticed in the lessons for the Day of Atonement and New Year; yet it seems that the portion Levit. xxiii. 23-25, containing only three verses, was taken and long adopted as the reading in many districts, since the Pesikta of R. Kahana knows only of this, and the Pesikta Rabbati bases

¹ The assumption of the Pisge Tossaphoth to *Megilla*, No. 108, which is also adopted by Müller (*Tractate Sopherim* p. 242), that Leviticus xxiii. was no longer read because it had already been used as the lesson for Passover is so far weak, inasmuch as originally only those verses of Levit. xxiii. were recited which were peculiar to the festivals on which they were to be read. It was not the whole chapter that was read on each festival.

² Maimonides (הלכות תפילה xiii.) opines that Deut. xvi. was the chapter established by rule, and Exod. xix. that generally adopted. This is in accordance with the method usually followed by him in the whole section on the Torah reading.

a homily on it near to one which has as its text Genesis xxi. It might have been confidently expected that the Babylonian Jews, who have readings for both days of the festival, should have accepted those which have the guarantee of tradition for their selection, since, where possible, they invariably followed the practice of the Palestinians, instead of which, however, we find in the Talmud that the original lesson was altogether excluded, the section for the second day of New Year being Genesis xxii. The fact that the Midrash (on the passage) shows that the event recorded in this portion happened on New Year's Day proves only that it knew of its recital on that occasion; it says nothing, however, to explain the actual introduction of the Seder. Let us consider the change which ensued in the Synagogue after the institution of regular sabbatical readings.

Formerly there were few readings during the year, and it was necessary on every occasion to roll the Torah to its allotted place. Now, however, there were Scriptural lessons every Sabbath and Festival, and there was no necessity to look specially for the various portions for occasional festivals, since the Torah was read through continuously. Since now there was a new institution in progress of establishment, and the religious leaders and teachers wished to accustom the people to the innovation, they enunciated the following rule: That henceforward no columns of the Torah were to be skipped over in proceeding from one section to another (*Megilla*, iv. 5). That this was still observed in the time of the Amoraim in the third century is evidenced from the question of an Amora who asked (*J. Megilla*, iv. 5) what was to be done when the portion was too brief. He had probably in mind Leviticus xxiii. 23-25, from which place perhaps many attempted to proceed direct to Numbers xxix. We are also told the reason on account of which the sages did not permit this rolling, so "that Israel should read through the Torah in continuous fashion." The Babylonian Jews also obeyed this rule, in-

asmuch as having selected Gen. xxi. for the first day of the New Year, in order that they should not be under the necessity of rolling the Torah to another place, they chose Gen. xxii. as the reading for the second day. We shall notice again a similar proceeding on the part of the Babylonian Jews. When this Seder was adopted as the New Year portion, perhaps also by some Palestinian communities as well, a theory arose in connection with it that Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son happened on this day. It need only be added that after the introduction of regular Sabbath readings the passages that were reached for the festivals in Genesis, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy happened to be suitable for those occasions. In none of the three years, however, was there any reference made to Succoth in the chapters that were apportioned to it in the regular cycle. Hence there was a return to the original Seder for the day.

This commenced according to the Tosefta (*Megilla* iv. 8) with xxiii. 33, which it is necessary to point out, since the Pesikta d'R. Kahana starts its consideration of the festival portion with v. 40, though this commentary always begins its exposition with the first verse. If we recall to our memory the establishment of the festival Sedarim and their historical origin, we notice that the remarks of the Midrash apply to the verse which was the cause of contention between the Samaritans and the Pharisees, and which therefore required interpretation; the festival reading, however, opened with an earlier verse.¹

¹ This explanation forms the basis of the remarkable passage עמי בני ישראל in the Targum pseudo-Jonathan, and in the Targum Yerushalmi on Leviticus xix. 16 and xxv. 15. This embellishment of the Targum is apparent also in Levit. xxii. 27, where in later times the Pesach Seder commenced; in Numbers xxviii. 2, Deut. xvi. 1, in the beginning of the festival readings with which are connected the Midrashic expositions, as e.g., the homilies of the Pesikta (V. Rappoport in *Erech Millin*, p. 169*). It is also noticeable in Deut. xiv. 22, which as in the other instances cited formed the opening verse of the festival Seder only in later times. In the two first-mentioned quotations, in a similar fashion to the Pesikta, the embellishment of the Targum is not found at all to the opening verses,

For the eighth day, which according to the Halacha is an independent festival, the Mishna does not assign any special Seder, since this was included under the comprehensive expression *בשאר כל ימות החג בקרבנות* (*Meg.* iii. 5), and therefore had, as its Scriptural lesson, Num. xxix. 35. Originally, as in seventh day of Pesach, either there was no lesson at all or the reading probably was taken from Leviticus xxiii., where the holiday is mentioned. When, however, Numbers xxix. was fixed for *חול המועד*, the passage above quoted was set aside for the eighth day. It cannot be determined when it was that Deut. xvi. was apportioned to this festival, nor can its introduction be explained, since not only was no reference made to the holiday in question in this portion, but Tabernacles is also described here as a seven-day feast.¹

We noticed above in the Mechilta that R. Eliezer dated the death of Moses on 7th of Shebat. If now our theory is the correct one, there must have been a completion of the Torah readings on this day. That this was really the case we shall shortly establish on the basis of many statements in the Midrash. Here it need only be remarked that Deut. xvi.—the assigning of which by tradition to *שמיני עצרת* bristles with difficulties—in accordance with a triennial division ending on 7th of Shebat, really falls on this feast, thus solving the problem satisfactorily. Since

but commences with a later one, where there is some difficulty that requires smoothing over, or where some special remark is to be made. This explains also the statement of R. Chanina (*Lev. Rabba*, cap. iii.) that Leviticus ii. 3 formed the opening verse in a certain synagogue (S. Friedman, *Beth Talmud*, III., p. 169), and the ten commandments, which, as the *Pesikta Rabba* shows, required individual exposition, have for the same reason ten times *עמי בני ישראל*.

¹ The manner in which the Boraitha (*B. Megilla*, 31a) explains the passage *יום טוב האחרון כל הבכור מצות וחקים ובכור* is very remarkable. This forced and unintelligible interpretation arises from the fact that the author of this expression could not give a better reason for the dependence of the festival on this portion. He was bound to go to the sacrificial observances to help him in this matter. (Cf. *Hammanhig*, p. 71.)

the Babylonian Jews required Sedarim for two days, and since, as already shown, no appropriate passage for Tabernacles was derived from the triennial cycle, they were obliged to repeat the first day's reading on the second. This proves that they were not in the habit of rolling the Torah from place to place, since, had they wished, they might have turned to Deut. xvi., and recited that on the second day. They appointed Deut. xxxiii. as the portion for the additional (9th) day of the festival. Yet there is no Talmudical foundation for assuming that this section was selected for that occasion, because, independently of a purposed selection, the Torah was then in the regular course of the cycle brought to an end; nor that in the time of the Talmud, שמחת תורה was already connected with the finishing of the Law (v. Grätz, *Monatschrift*, 1869, p. 394). The choice of this Seder is even now inexplicable to me.

Having examined the series of festival readings, we can now devote our attention to the Sedarim of the four special Sabbaths. There is something, however, to be said first about the series itself. The Mishna already lays down the rule (*Megilla*, iii. 4) that on Sabbath, the first of Adar, or on the Sabbath immediately preceding it, Shekalim should be read; on the Sabbath before Purim, Zachor; on the following week, Para; and on the Sabbath before the 1st Nisan, Hachodesh. The two Talmuds explain in full the arrangement of the four Parashas which were read between the last Sabbath in Shebat and the last in Adar, the number of Sabbaths in this interval varying in different years. The question, which we cannot suppress in face of this strict regulation, how does this series come about, and why are these four anomalous portions recited in the same month, and not in different months, we can answer very simply in accordance with the suggestions made above.

The Sedarim of the year came to an end on the first Sabbath in Adar; there were consequently four Sabbaths

unprovided with portions, since the Torah was recommenced on 1st Nissan. The four unusual Sedarim were therefore apportioned to these days. According to this view, Shekalim should be read on the second Sabbath of Adar, which is inconsistent with the Mishnaic ruling on the subject. Does this not also betoken development? We understand how it is that the Parasha Hachodesh, which deals with the 1st Nissan, should have been read on the Sabbath before the New Moon, or on the New Moon itself, when this fell on the Sabbath. For in the second year of the cycle whose initiatory reading was this portion, we saw clearly that it was read on the second Sabbath before Passover. Further, it is conceivable that Zachor should be placed in immediate proximity to Purim, since both Zachor (Deut. xxv.) and Esther speak of artifices resorted to by Israel's enemies. (The Aggada that Haman sprang from the stock of the Amalekites had its origin in this juxtaposition). How stands the matter with Para and Shekalim? In reference to the former, the Sifre (to Num. vii. 1) remarks that the Red Heifer was on the first occasion prepared on the 2nd Nissan, and in the Talmud (*J. Meg.* iii. 6) an Amora declares that the section dealing with this sacrifice must be read after Parasha Hachodesh. Hence it follows that there really existed a time when this formed the scriptural lesson for the first Sabbath in Nissan. At this period the regular Sabbath readings had not yet been introduced, and no obstacle stood in the way of reciting this portion on the first Sabbath in Nissan when Hachodesh had been read the Sabbath before. Now, however, since in consequence of the innovation of regular readings, the Sabbaths in Nissan were supplied with Sedarim regulated according to the triennial cycle, the section describing the ceremony of the Red Cow had to be transposed before Hachodesh. The above-mentioned Amora explains that the dislocation in question was brought about in order that the Israelites might before Nissan have their

attention called to the laws concerning the purifying of the unclean.

Let us now turn to Shekalim. We pointed out above that the controversy of the Sadducees in respect to the employment of the shekel collection lasted from the 1st to 8th Nissan, in commemoration of which controversy and consequent decision these days were to be observed as minor holidays. It is pretty evident, in the light of this fact, that Shekalim, at the time of its introduction, was read on the second Sabbath of Nissan, from which place it was afterwards removed, in consequence of its interfering with the regular Sabbath portions. The arrangement of the four extraordinary Sedarim would accordingly be Zachor, Para, Shekalim and Hachodesh respectively, for the second, third, and fourth Sabbaths in Adar and the first in Nissan. How, then, did the Mishna come to adopt its series, and how came it that the Parashas were placed two Sabbaths back? In the Mishna (*Shek.* i. 1) the fact is narrated that every year, on 1st Adar, people were reminded of their duty to contribute towards the Shekalim fund. Although, indeed, in the Palestinian Talmud this publication is not identified with the reading of its appropriate Biblical section, we are justified in assuming that the misplacement of Shekalim was due to the fact that it was read to realise the above-mentioned object. It would now be possible to assume, were it not expressly excluded in the Mishna (*Megilla*, iii. 4), that the regular Sabbath reading was interrupted, and the Seder, which had still to be recited, was assigned to one of the Sabbaths in Adar, which had not yet been endowed with a portion. We are thus forced to the opinion that the reading of the Sedarim was brought to a conclusion on the last Sabbath before Adar, and that the four following Sabbaths were left free for the four Parashas. It is this way that Shekalim came to be apportioned to 1st Adar; and, therefore, according to the order adopted, Hachodesh would be read about the middle of Adar. This stage in the development also clearly ap-

pears in a controversy of the Tannaim, namely, a Boraitha says (*B. Pessachim* 6a), שואלין ודורשין בהלכות הפסח קודם, חפסח שלושים יום רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר שתי שבחות "Lectures are held on the laws concerning Passover thirty days before the festival; R. Simeon b. Gamliel says two weeks before" (v. *Müller Tractate Sopherim*, p. 144). The real nature of this dispute can only adequately be gauged by noticing that, according to the first opinion (which alone is mentioned in the *Tosefta Meg.* iv. 5), Hachodesh, which formed the basis of the discourse, was read within thirty days before the Passover, viz., on the Sabbath before the 15th Adar, on the ground that the ordinary Sedarim came to an end on the second Sabbath of Shebat; and, according to the view of Simeon b. Gamliel, it was read on the first of Nissan, on the assumption that the regular reading was finished about the 7th Adar.

There was thus one partition of the Sedarim which brought the course to an end on the second Sabbath of Shebat. A confirmation of this theory is found in the fact that R. Eliezer's opinion that Moses died on the 7th of Shebat implies a conclusion of the Torah about this time. Already in the period of the compilation of the Mishna the series was so arranged that the first of the four Parashas should be Shekalim, which being read about the 1st Adar, allowed for the proximity of Zachor to Purim, and the reciting of Hachodesh before the 1st of Nissan. On the first Sabbath in Nissan, according to the division generally adopted, and described above, the usual reading of the Law was recommenced.

As regards the portions themselves read in the four extraordinary Sabbaths, they are not at all the portions that would have been reached in the regular Sabbath lessons, since these latter are of a much later date. The Babylonian Jews were not agreed as to the exact section of the Law which was to be read on the Shekalim Sabbath. We see that the oldest Midrashic compilations containing Halacha, the Mechilta, Sifra, and Sifre,

make mention of neither the institution, nor of the Sedarim read on the four special Sabbaths. We can infer from this that with the destruction of Jerusalem not only did the controversy cease between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, but the customs also which were the outcome of this strife, since they applied only to the Temple worship. The origin of the four Sabbaths, like many other facts, was thus forgotten, whilst the custom of reading the allotted portion was afterwards re-adopted, as a result of the tendency to incorporate in the ritual every memento of the Temple service. The Shekalim portion was not by any means exempt from this general oblivion. Rab, about 210 C.E., when he returned to Babylon, heard a different Seder read there than in Palestine. He knew Numbers xxviii. 1 as the Shekalim Parasha. Samuel, on the other hand (*B. Megilla*, 29b), gives Exod. xxx. 11, where the Shekalim are expressly mentioned. This latter view (*loc. cit.*) is supported by a Boraitha which, describing the section by its initial word, bears indisputable testimony to the fact that Ex. xxx. 11 was read on Shekalim. Reverting to the origin of the institution, we notice that in accordance with the quotation from Megillath Taanith given above, the Sadducean polemic raged about Numbers xxviii. 4. Consequently Rab's opinion on this point, in addition to its being trustworthy on account of his position as a pupil of the Palestinian school, receives considerable support from this fact. If we bear in mind, also, that in the portion named by Samuel no word is mentioned about the employment of the Shekalim for the daily offering—the dispute concerning which really formed the occasion of the reading of Shekalim—it is clear that the Seder mentioned by Samuel was not the original one selected. It owed its introduction to the fact that the explicit allusion to the Shekalim in Ex. xxx. 11 was calculated to commemorate the old rite which had now fallen into disuse. Taking into account the Boraitha above quoted, this Seder must also have been read in Palestine. We must not forget as well

that in this portion it is stated how the Shekalim were to be applied to the offerings (*J. Shekalim*, i. 1). Both Pesiktas, which like the Midrash are of Palestinian origin, only treat of this Parasha. There are not wanting, however, some traces of the original reading. For both Pesiktas, after having dealt with the Sedarim of the four extraordinary Sabbaths, proceed to discuss a fifth, namely, Numbers xxviii. 1. It was generally accepted that this was provided in the event of New Moon of Nissan falling on a Sabbath. Friedmann (Pesikta Rabbati on this passage), however, has undeniably demonstrated that there is no warranty for this assumption, by proving that it was destined as a discourse for the first week of Nissan, for the controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees had application to the rendering of this portion, and they were polemically engaged on this matter at the beginning of Nissan. If we add to this what was proved above, that originally this Parasha was recited on the first Sabbath in Nissan, it will become clear and intelligible to us how it was that in the Pesiktas the discussion of Num. xxviii. 1 occurs just before the explanation of the portion read on the first day of Pesach. There is no difference of opinion in respect to the three other Sabbath Sedarim. The To-sefta (*Meg.* iv. 4), which merely mentions a reading for Shekalim without defining what chapter was to be read, apportions Exodus xii. for Hachodesh, Numbers xiv. for Para, and Deuteronomy xxv. 17 for Zachor.

We now reach the third stage in the development of the public reading of the Law (see above, p. 427). This stage concerns the lessons for the middle days of festivals, New Moons, and ordinary Sabbaths. Of the changes in the last named readings I have already spoken; there are no important variations to be noticed in the lessons for the middle days of festivals and the New Moons. For *חול המועד סוכה* the Mishna selects Numbers xxix. 17-34, from which the appropriate portions are to be taken for the respective days. In the time of the Tannaim there

were no Parashas for חול המועד פסח, just as there was none for the seventh day. Nor does the Palestinian Talmud assign any portions for these days, and hence it may be inferred that the reading during Pesach was at that time confined to the first day, and, of course, שבת חול המועד. Since, unlike Succoth, there were no successive Pentateuchal portions treating of Pesach, the Tosefta (*Megilla*, iv. 5), with a view to meeting this want, enacts that those readings should be selected for חול המועד which deal with Pesach and which are found scattered throughout the Torah. This method of proceeding, which has no analogy, was suggested by the circumstance that on the second year of the cycle Exodus xiii. was reached on the Sabbath during Pesach, and in the third year Numbers ix. These sections could very well be made into Parashas for חול המועד, since they both speak about Pesach. To these were added Exodus xxiii. and xxxiv., these four pieces being read on the four days, according to the order in which they occur in the Torah. It was first in Babylon—in which place the contents of the portion read was always taken into account—that it was arranged that Exodus xxxiv. should be selected for שבת חול המועד both on Pesach and Succoth. And for this reason—that the Sabbath is mentioned there as well as the festival (*B. Megilla*, 31a). For the other days the portions cited remained unchanged (cp. *Shibbole halleket*, פסח, cap. 219). Numbers xxviii. 11 was the only Seder that could be chosen for the New Moon, for there is no other chapter in the Torah which could be appropriately taken as the lesson for this occasion. The question as to which was the initial verse of this portion was first raised in Babylon (*B. Megilla*, 21b). There it is laid down that ten should be the least number of verses for a week-day reading, and twelve for Rosh Hachodesh. It was, therefore, resolved to commence the Parasha with verse 1. When New Moon fell on Sabbath, the special portion for this day alone was read in Palestine, the ordinary reading

for that Sabbath being omitted.¹ The later teachers first combined both, and established that the special lesson for the day should be read after the regular portion for that Sabbath had been gone through.

In the same passage two other Sedarim are enumerated for the minor holidays of Chanucca and Purim respectively, which belong to the last stage of the development. These feasts are reckoned among the days on which the serial reading of the Torah is to be interrupted in favour of the special festival portion. Since Chanucca is the Feast of Lights, a part of the Torah had to be sought which treated of the import of the same. This was found in Numbers viii. 1, where the lights and the kindling of them is described (*Megilla*, iii. 6; *Sopherim*, xx. 10). In vii. 84, however, we find the expression זֹאת חֲנֻכַּת הַבֵּית, which formed a suitable beginning, not only on account of the occurrence of the words חֲנֻכָּה, but because of its applicability to the festival and its signification. Therefore did the Mishna select פֶּרֶשֶׁת נְשִׂאִים for the Chanucca reading. When this holiday was made equal to Pesach and Succoth in respect to its being provided with daily readings, the portion was begun at Numbers vii. 1, so that a different piece could be read every day. Since the Seder (Sabbath portion) opened with vi. 22, later authorities² (*Halachoth Pesucoth*, p. 132) made this also the initial verse of the Chanucca readings. The Tosefta does not apportion any Parasha to Chanucca. This fact, combined with what was remarked above, proves to us that Chanucca was not always considered as equal to a half-festival. There was probably a time when there was a Chanucca reading only on Sabbath, or perhaps also on the eighth day.³ It was

¹ That the Mishna speaks of this, and not of the Haftara, is clear from the fact that there is mentioned the Day of Atonement, where it can only be explained that the Sabbath portion lapses, and is substituted by another.

² So also the MS. Catalogue Neubauer, No. 620, p. 79b.

³ *Vide* Sopherim xx. 10, and the second discourse of both Pesiktas to Numbers vii. 54.

only at a comparatively late period that an every-day reading was instituted for this feast (*J. Megilla*, iii. 6). It seems also that originally there was special reading for Purim only when it fell on Sabbath, and later on a portion was introduced for the week-day, for the Tosefta here also does not make mention of any Parasha.

Which was the original Parasha may be gathered from the Mishna (*Meg.* iii. 4). The Mishna supposes a case where the 1st of Adar falls on Sabbath, on which day Shekalim would be read. There would thus be left four Sabbaths in this month, the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, and only three special portions. This circumstance made it necessary to consider one of these Sabbaths—here the first—as an ordinary Sabbath. Otherwise—and this as was decided above, is impossible—there would be an ordinary reading on the last Sabbath of the year. Thus it happened that Zachor was read on the 15th (Purim), no special lesson being assigned for a week-day Purim. When, however, it was observed that a portion treating of the Amalekites was read on Sabbath, which was at the same time Purim, a similar piece, namely, Exod. xvii. 8, was chosen for Purim should it fall on a week-day.

We have still to mention among the extraordinary readings those in vogue on fast-days, to which the Mishna has allotted (*Megilla*, iii. 6) ברכות וקללות, i.e., Deuteronomy xxviii., or Leviticus xxvi.

Before we proceed to investigate the reason for this remarkable selection, we notice that the Tosefta mentions only the 9th Ab, and quotes two opposing views as to which of two portions should be read, viz., **אם לא תשמע**,¹ or Deuteronomy iv. 25. This limitation of the rule shows that originally the curses were read only on the 9th of Ab.

¹ The portion chosen by the Mishna, and called by it **ברכות וקללות**, literally taken, would exclude the curses in Leviticus xxvi., which are not preceded as in Deuteronomy by blessings, each of which is headed by the expression **ברוך**. From this we infer that **אם לא תשמע** is incorrect, and stands for **אם לא תשמע**, Deut. xxviii. 15.

A confirmation of this theory is afforded by the contents of the chapter, which describes the sorrows of a siege, and the trials of an exile, such as that which befell Israel on the 9th of Ab.

It was undoubtedly the contents of this piece which caused it to be chosen. The same in other words was the contents of the second section selected by the Tosefta, namely, Deuteronomy iv. 25. Since we saw that a new portion was never substituted for the original reading, unless for some good reason, we must again here consider the Sabbath Sedarim. And, in fact, we notice that according to the division of R. Eliezer, who brings the Torah to a conclusion on the 7th of Shebat, Deut. iv. 25 would actually be reached on the 9th Ab. We find in the Boraitha (*B. Meg.* 31a) a third portion assigned to the 9th of Ab, namely, Numbers xiv. 11, or 26, where no reference to the fast-day is apparent. If, however, we take into consideration the remark of the Mishna (*Taanith*, iv. 6) that on the 9th of Ab it was decided by God none of those Israelites who had journeyed through the wilderness should reach the Holy Land, we see that this choice was dependent on the Mishna. This is a proof that the reading in question was of very late introduction.

Since we have now dealt with the extraordinary readings of the special days, we will return to the practice of reading the Law on Saturday afternoon, and Monday and Thursday mornings. The introduction of this rite is ascribed to Ezra. This reading was instituted on the two week-days with the object of giving instruction to the villagers who came to the town on these days. This, however, cannot be the reason which caused the Sabbath afternoon lesson to be established, for no one came to town on the Sabbath. It probably originated with the desire to have a Torah portion with the usual Saturday afternoon discourse (*v. Rappoport*, *Erech Millin*, article **אפטירה**). Since the ordinary Sabbath Parasha had been read in the morning it was deemed advisable to commence in the after-

noon with the verse immediately after the concluding passage of the morning's portion. Although it was Sabbath yet the ordinary rules of the Sabbath Sedarim were not adopted in connection with the afternoon readings, but they were scheduled in this respect with the weekly readings. And for this reason: The arrangement of the Sabbath portions was already firmly established, and there would be an objection against interfering with it; and on this account it was determined not to read a whole Seder on Sabbath afternoon.

This question, however, cannot be so summarily disposed of. The Mishna, indeed, says (*Meg.* iii. 6) that the portion read on the three above-mentioned occasions, should be repeated on the Sabbath following, for, otherwise, those portions, which are peculiarly appropriate for certain days, would not actually form their Pentateuchal lessons. This gives colour to the opinion that there must have been many synagogues, or localities, where the custom was not adopted of repeating the weekly reading on the immediately succeeding Sabbath, and, in fact, the Tosefta (*Meg.* iv. 10) names R. Judah as an advocate of this view. How then did this Tanna read the Torah? Did he adopt a triennial cycle? Or was Grätz correct (*Monatsschrift*, 1869, p. 396) in assuming that R. Judah read through the Torah in two years? Let us revert for a few minutes to the result of our previous considerations. We found that the cycle of the Torah portions was generally commenced on the 1st of Nissan, and this was necessary, so that several Sidras should fall on certain festivals. The statements in the Mechilta make it clear that this coincidence was sufficiently established by the ordinary division of the portions. It was further shown that the Torah was read continuously from the 1st of Nissan to the 7th of Adar, and that originally it was not necessary to look for other Parashas outside the usual Sabbath Sedarim.

Since by taking into account the Sabbath and festival portions, there were at least fifty-four Sedarim in an

ordinary year, the whole constitution of the division into Sedarim is shaken, for the Massora enumerates only one hundred and fifty-five for three years. If we consider more closely the festival portions, Exodus xii. 29, for the first day of Pesach; xiii. 17, for the seventh; xx. 1, for Shebuoth, in the second year of the cycle; and Numbers ix. 1, for the first day of Pesach in the third year, we notice that these lessons do not start at the beginning of Sedarim, but are only parts of Sedarim which are more lengthy than others. This may be proved also to apply, without exception, to all the readings of the festivals, and the four extraordinary Sabbaths, and in this way all difficulty is removed.

Thus, only one hundred and forty-one, or since there is a leap year among the three, one hundred and forty-six Sedarim would be required. The remaining nine, which the Massora gives in addition, were instituted—as many portions were in the annual cycle—for the purpose of supplying with lessons those Sabbaths which are added to certain years, and also to make it possible that the appropriate passages should be assigned to the right occasions. When this surplus was not necessary, two Sedarim were read on one Sabbath, as was shown distinctly in the detailed account of the triennial cycle. We saw also, that it was afterwards introduced to read the ordinary Sabbath Seder together with the portion of the extraordinary Sabbath, so that one hundred and sixty-one Parashas were required for three years. In fact, Menachem Meiri, as mentioned above, enumerates just this number of Sedarim, the origin of which is now clear to us. The one hundred and sixty-seven of the Manuel (*loc. cit.*) are to be explained only as a provision for possible emergencies, as we found was the case with the one hundred and fifty-five of the Massora, especially since, through the introduction of the established Kalendar, every one of the years forming the triennial cycle could at one time or other be a leap year, three books of the Pentateuch had to always contain four

more Sedarim than were otherwise strictly necessary. Genesis, which was begun on 1st Nissan, and Leviticus which was begun on 1st Elul, did not require this extra division, since the reading of both these books concluded on the 15th of Shebat, so that they had no concern with the additional month of the leap year. Indeed, we notice that the Massora, Meiri, and the author of the Manuel, while differing considerably in their enumeration of the Sedarim in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are in perfect agreement as regards the computation of the Sedarim in Leviticus, and differ only in a slight degree in respect to Genesis.

It is possible to discover with some degree of probability the origin of the division of the *Tractate Sopherim* (*loc. cit.*) into one hundred and seventy-five parts—if this really ever existed in fact. I have already remarked that the Festival Parashas, and those selected for the four extraordinary Sabbaths, do not indeed form independent Sedarim. If now we enumerate these individually—Exod. xii. 1, xiii. 17, xx. 1, xxx. 9; Lev. xvi. 1; Num. xix. 1, xxii. 26; Deut. xv. 19, xxv. 17—and perhaps also the Chanucca and Purim Parashas, we have nine or eleven portions which might have been taken as special Sedarim. We have now to add to this the one hundred and sixty-six divisions which the author above mentioned perhaps arrived at, and in this way we obtain the number one hundred and seventy-five.¹

To be sure, the question can be asked, How could the author of the one hundred and seventy-five computation go so far as to consider the eight verses in Exod. xxx. 1-8, as a special Seder, since tradition always assigns twenty-one verses as a Sabbath portion? This leads us to discuss

¹ Some colour is added to this view by the division according to the annual cycle, which arranges four of the enumerated passages as new weekly portions; there are very few instances, namely, Gen. xviii. 1, xxvii. 28; Lev. vi. 1, etc., in which a weekly portion according to the annual cycle commences otherwise than with a new Massoretic Seder.

the question as to what was the number of verses read on Sabbaths and Festivals in most ancient times.

If we examine the division of the Sedarim given by the Massora which, in consequence of its having the smallest amount of portions contains the most lengthy Sedarim, we find the following readings — Gen. xii. 1-9, xxv. 1-18; Num. xi. 16-22, xxv. 1-9; and Deut. xxiii. 10-21—which comprise less verses than tradition requires. Let us, however, consider the traditional statements on the subject. The Mishna says (*Meg.* iv. 4) “Whoever reads out of the Law publicly, shall read no less than three verses; to the translator, however, no more than one.” (The Meturgeman expounded every verse in Aramaic to the people after it was given forth in Hebrew, because they no longer understood the original language of the Torah.) Further, we are told (*Meg.* iv. 1) that on Sabbath afternoon and Monday and Thursday mornings, three persons should be called to read the lesson from the Law; on New Moon and חול המועד, four; on festivals, five; on the Day of Atonement, six; and on Sabbath, seven. This arrangement may have been carried out in two ways. Either every person read the same three verses, or another three, in which latter case there must have been nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-one verses respectively. Yet in the Massoretic division we meet with Sabbath Sedarim that contain only seven, eight, and nine verses. Are we not compelled to admit a development from the origin of the Sabbath Sedarim to its firm establishment in the ritual which is found in the Massora, and from ancient times, till the period when the Mishna enumerated rules for the same?

If we take into consideration one of the most extensive of the Sabbath readings—the verses in Leviticus xxvi. 3-46—verses 3-13 would fall, in lots of three verses, to the first three persons; 14-46, which were not to be interrupted, to the fourth, and the Seder is thus brought to a finish; so that a portion of such great length was not

sufficient for seven persons. This indeed it is difficult to assume.¹ Neither the Mishna nor the Tosefta mentions the twenty-one verses, nor do they say anything concerning the rule that the seven persons should each read three different verses. We find only the following enactment in the Tosefta (*Meg.* iv. 17): "No less than three verses should be recited; should, however, the Parasha contain four, the person called up must read all; if five, then the first reads three, and leaves the remaining two to the next comer, who adds, as a third verse, the first of the following portion." The Talmud (*J. Meg.* 75a) mentions a Boraitha which speaks of the twenty-one verses. These, however, were applied to the Haftara, and not to the Pentateuchal lesson. What must be considered the original method of reading the Torah can only be derived from the oldest festival portions, which indeed formed the earliest of the Pentateuch Sedarim. If we examine for a few moments the discussion (*J. Meg.* iv. 3) as to whether six or seven² persons should

¹ This difficulty gave rise in the third century to the discussion as to where the Tochecha ended. In Yelamdenu we find: ער היכן תוכחה רב: אמר עד הכאה ושמואל אמר עד קללה ר' יוחנן אמר עד נזיפה (vide *Revue des Etudes Juives*, vol. xiv., p. 94). We have already seen several times that Rav had a compendious code of rules for the reading of the Torah; the Boraitha in *Meg.* 31a, which contains all the portions for the festivals and חול המועד, fathers the tradition for the same on him. We shall see that R. Jochanan had equal importance in Palestine.

² The Day of Atonement is considered in the Halacha as equal in every respect to the Sabbath, and not as a festival (*Meg.* i. 5). Yet, as we shall now see, this was not the reason which prompted the calling-up of seven persons on the Day of Atonement as on Sabbath. It is, however, probable that the afternoon reading on Atonement was occasioned from its being scheduled with Sabbath, which, as we have already noticed, had an afternoon portion. Neither the Mishna nor the Tosefta nor Palestinian Talmud know of its existence. The Boraitha (*Meg.* 31a) mentions it, together with its Haftara, which statement, like others, probably originated with Rab. The portion is Leviticus xviii., which was chosen, in spite of the utter want of connection between the festival and its contents, in obedience to the rule quoted above, that the Torah should not be rolled on festivals from one place to another. In Babylon the seventeenth chapter was also read (perhaps even in Palestine as well, according to the Bo-

be called up to the Torah on the Day of Atonement, and if we divide the original Atonement Seder (Lev. xxiii. 26—32) into six or seven sections, we immediately see that the whole consists only of seven verses, the first containing the five words וידבר ה' אל משה לאמור.

Let us, in addition, take into consideration another Boraita (*B. Meg.* 21*b*), which treats of the question whether this verse, which is merely an introductory formula, ought to be reckoned as part of the lesson from the Torah (cp. *J. Meg.* iv. 3, and *J. Kethuboth* ii. 10). From the fact that it is emphatically stated that this verse is to be reckoned among the others, it is clear that there was formerly a doubt on this matter; and we see that this question must have applied also to the Seder for the Day of Atonement. If we count this verse with the others we have seven; if not, six; and now we understand what was the point of discussion, and what the basis of controversy. The general practice was to call up only six persons to the Torah, since there were only six verses which had any substance in them. R. Akiba, however, in whose eyes, it is well-known, every word of the Torah was of equal importance (v. Bacher, *Aggada der Tannaiten*, I., p. 308), would not allow of any verse being esteemed of less value than the others, and on this account seven persons had, according to R. Akiba, to be called up to the Torah on the Day of

raitha, if the remark there is not an interpolation, because it was impossible to skip any part of the text). But it cannot be decided whether it was read in the morning with ch. xvi., or in the afternoon with ch. xviii. *Halachoth Kesuboth*, p. 38, adds it to ch. xvi.

The statement given in a portion of a MS. which probably belonged to the Siddur of Saadyah is worthy of notice (Neubauer, *Catalogue*, No. e. 25, p. 2), namely, that there existed in many Synagogues the practice of reading the law and Haftara to Neilah as well. The wording of this passage of the MS. runs as follows:—וקום ייזרון יברגון ספרא יקרין קבל—נעילה בראשית ויפטרון קומי אורי וליים הו אנל. It was noticed that the fast days had a special afternoon portion, and since Yom Kippur was a fast day, a third reading was added to that adopted on account of its resemblance to Sabbath. Saadyah, however, unreservedly rejects this opinion.

Atonement. At any rate, it is to be inferred from this discussion that only one verse was read by each person. This is confirmed by the practice in vogue of dividing the reading of the Law on festivals amongst five individuals; for, originally, the Pesach Seder contained only five verses, namely, Leviticus xxiii. 4-8. The oldest Sabbath lessons were, we have already seen, those of the four extraordinary Sabbaths, the first of these being the Parasha recited on Sabbath Shekalim, namely, Numbers xxviii. 1-8. In this section the first verse is, like that of the Seder for the Day of Atonement, without substantial contents; so that only seven remain, whence arose the custom of calling up seven persons to the Torah every Sabbath. Already, then, in ancient times, there was in vogue the practice of having a different number of individuals engaged in reading the Law on different occasions, namely, five, six, and seven. When, therefore, חול המועד was provided with a portion, in order to make a distinction, it was determined to have four persons on those days, and finally, three on week days. The original basis for these numbers was no doubt soon forgotten and it was adopted that three verses should form the portion read by each individual. Thus it came about that twenty-one verses were fixed for the Sabbath Seder. Yet the Mishna preserves traces of the old usage. It was not allowed (*Meg.* iii. 1) that more or less persons should read the Torah on week-days and חול המועד than was ordained. It was necessary to enunciate this rule, and to permit no exception, since these occasions were supplied with readings for the first time in the days of the Mishna, and the portions which the sages arranged for the same—such as Numbers xxviii. 11-15 (five verses) and xxix. 17-19 (three verses)—sometimes contained more and sometimes less verses than was the number of persons who had to be called up to the Torah.

On Festivals and Sabbaths, however, the Mishna registered no protest against the practice of having more than

five or seven persons to read the Torah respectively; for the custom existed of old to read Lev. xxiii. 15-22 on Shebuoth, and 33-44 on Succoth, both of which comprised more than five verses, and, therefore, more than five persons were engaged in their recital. We can also consider as a relic of the usage that every person should read only one verse, the practice of the Meturgeman in the synagogue, who translated every verse individually. Having regard to the connection between the verses, this proceeding would never have been allowed, were it not that it was derived from an old custom of reading the verses one by one. We find also in the Talmud (*B. Baba Kama*, 82*a*) traces of the conviction that less verses were read at a previous period. For it is stated there that Ezra extended the week-day reading to include ten verses, whilst the Prophets contented themselves with nine verses. Since, then, seven verses were sufficient for Sabbath, we can now understand how it is that, amongst the Sedarim given by the Mas-sora, there are some containing only seven, eight, or nine verses. And, even when the rule was established to apportion three verses to every person, this custom of having short Sedarim did not altogether lapse; for we see clearly, from the assigning (*J. Meg.* iii. 6) of Numbers xxviii. 11-15 as the Sabbath New Moon Seder, even if verses 1-10 are added, there is only sufficient for two verses to each person. It was, indeed, equally unintelligible to the Amoraim how it was that people were satisfied with such a small Seder; yet the practice in the synagogue bore testimony against that very rule. If a Sabbath Seder, on the other hand, happened to be lengthy, more than seven persons were occupied in its reading. This custom is testified to by R. Jochanan, who arranged the readings in Palestine, and R. Joshua b. Levi (*B. Meg.*, 32*a*), both of whom mention ten persons as a possible number for a Sabbath portion. On the basis of these considerations, we can now very easily answer the question how it was that the Pentateuch was sufficient for a triennial reading for R. Jehudah,

who would not allow the weekly portion to be repeated on the Sabbath. Every one of the three weekly lessons contained for him three verses, and the Sabbath lesson seven verses, so that a Seder need only have consisted of sixteen verses in order to have included all the weekly readings. The Talmudic rules, which enact that at least ten verses should form the week-day portion and twenty-one verses for Sabbath, are a product of a later age, at which period also the opinion was adopted, which the Mishna makes mention of, that the portion which was read during the week was to be repeated on the Sabbath following (*J. Taanith*, iv. 3; *B. Meg.*, 21*b*); and even then these rules were only theoretically accepted in Palestine. They were not actually followed in synagogal practice, which view the Massoretic partition of the Sedarim fully endorses. The Babylonian Jews, who strictly adhered to the traditional rules emanating from Palestine, and made them the bases of further development, were the first to carry out these rules to the letter. As it has already been stated, it was Rab who, coming from the Palestinian schools, first brought into vogue in Babylonia the decisions of the Palestinian teachers. Perhaps it was he who reorganised the triennial reading of the Law, and arranged it according to an annual cycle; for we see that the final and permanent institution of the Pentateuch and Prophet portions for festivals and minor holidays is quoted in his name (*B. Meg.*, 31*a*).

It cannot be decided with certainty what caused him to make such a radical innovation. He might have been influenced by the idea that every command in the Torah applies to each year, and that, therefore, it was right and proper to read the same portions year by year on those days to which these passages are peculiarly appropriate. The principal question to be dealt with is, When was the annual cycle of the readings to be commenced? We have already determined this from statements quoted above from the Mishna, but only in respect to a triennial cycle, to which

they apply. How was it to be decided in accordance with the annual cycle adopted by the Babylonian Jews? Tradition informs us (*B. Meg.*, 31*b*) that Ezra introduced the custom of reading the curses in Lev. xxvi. before Shebuoth, and those in Deut. xxviii. before New Year. A date is thus given for these two Sedarim, and also, at the same time, for the beginning of the cycle. For since Deut. xxviii. had to be read before New Year, and the Palestinian festival portions were retained by the Babylonians, the Pentateuch could only have been brought to an end in Tishri; hence arose the custom of commencing Genesis immediately after the concluding festival (שמחה תורה).

On the basis of these three dates being assigned to their respective portions,¹ the Torah was divided into weekly Sedarim. There was as little deviation as possible from the Palestinian partition. Very few new Parashas were added, and even then they were founded on the Palestinian division. Thus Genesis xxiii. 1, was added where the New Year's portion ends; and, as mentioned above, other Parashas were added at the point where the old festival readings and those read on the extraordinary Sabbaths began. Leap year necessitated a further division of the weekly portions. Since it was desired to maintain in its integrity the dates mentioned, it does not seem that the passages where the necessary division had to be made was absolutely determined on. For in the later Middle Ages we find a number of works which proffer different accounts on this matter.

At the time when the rules for the week-day readings were established, the fundamental principle was laid down never to commence or finish a portion with words of ill omen. Thus early the portion Deut. xxxii., which is a

¹ It seems that the dates mentioned above, when the separate books were finished in Palestine, had a great influence over the division of the portions, since Leviticus, following the Boraitha, was concluded before Shebuoth, Numbers in the first week of Ab, Exodus about the 1st of Nissan, and Genesis during Shebat.

chapter of trials and troubles, was divided, not only for the seven persons on Sabbath, but also on week-days (*Tractate Sopherim* xii. 8, 9 ; cp. Harkavy, *Responsen der Gaonen*, p. 96).¹ All, however, did not at once accept a similar division. A fragment (*Catalog. Neubauer*, Appendix No. e. 45, p. 6a) tells of a difference in the division into seven parts, as follows:—וּיִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֵר קֹרֵא מִן וִירָא יִי וְעַד לִילִי—כַּעַס אֲזִיב וִישְׂרָאֵל אַחֵר קֹרֵא מִן לִילִי וְעַד כִּי קְרֹב יוֹם אִידִם וְאֵל תַּחֲו קוֹרִין כַּשֵּׁם שְׁקוֹרִין בְּאַפְרִיקָה שְׁמַסִּימִין שְׁנֵי פְסוּקִין בְּפִסּוּק אֶחָד לִי נֶקֶם פִּסּוּק אֶחָד בְּפָנֵי עֲצֻמוֹ וְכִי קְרֹב יוֹם אִידִם פִּסּוּק אַחֵר הוּא בְּפָנֵי עֲצֻמוֹ • וּמִן כִּי קְרֹב יוֹם אִידִם וְעַד וִיבּוֹא מֹשֶׁה וִישְׂרָאֵל אַחֵר קֹרֵא אַחֵר קֹרֵא מִן וִיבּוֹא מֹשֶׁה וְעַד סוֹף הַפְּרָשָׁה.

Thus one verse was divided into two, in order to conclude with words of good hope and cheer.

There are yet many questions which arise in connection with the transformation of the triennial into the annual cycle. These, however, cannot be dealt with in the limits of this essay. I shall, however, return to many of them in a subsequent article treating of the Prophetical readings.

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¹ Cp. *Jer. Megilla* III. 7, and *Bab. Rosh Hash.* 31a. It is again Rab who says that this chapter has to be divided for the reading in the synagogue in the same way as the Levites did it in the Temple.
